



Data Points

RESULTS FROM THE CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY

The U.S. Public Health Service recommends that women of childbearing age consume 400 micrograms (0.4 milligram) of synthetic folic acid daily to reduce the risk of having a pregnancy affected by spina bifida or anencephaly. Folic acid may be consumed by taking a vitamin supplement or eating fortified breakfast cereals or other fortified foods. Folic acid, when taken one month before conception and throughout the first trimester of pregnancy, has proven to reduce the risk of a neural tube defect (NTD)-affected pregnancy by 50% to 70%.¹

Respondents to the 2000 California Women's Health Survey were asked if they had heard or read about folic acid, why folic acid is recommended for women, and whether they were currently taking a prenatal vitamin, multivitamin, or another pill containing the B vitamin folate or folic acid. Responses were analyzed for women of childbearing age (18 through 44 years).

- While 64% of women of childbearing age had heard or read of folic acid or

folate, only 44% knew of its importance in reducing birth defects, and 49% were taking supplements with folic acid.

- Higher education was associated with increased awareness and use of folic acid; 35% of women who had not completed high school had heard or read about folic acid compared to 68% of those who completed high school or more. Also, 32% of women who had not completed high school were taking a folic acid supplement compared to 52% of those who completed high school or more.
- Of women who were trying to become pregnant, 59% knew folic acid can prevent birth defects and 53% were taking a folic acid supplement.
- Latina women were least likely to report knowledge (24%) or use of folic acid (35%).

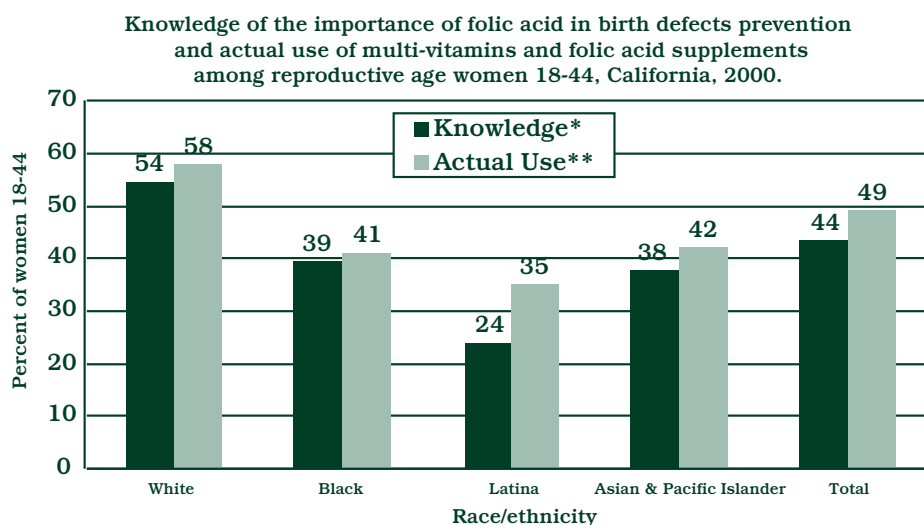
¹ Burke, Beth; Lyon Daniel, Katherine; et al, Preventing Neural Tube Birth Defects: A Prevention Model and Resource Guide, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1998.

WOMEN'S USE OF FOLIC ACID SUPPLEMENTS AND KNOWLEDGE OF ITS IMPORTANCE FOR PREVENTION OF BIRTH DEFECTS, CALIFORNIA, 2000

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Public Health Message:

An appropriate public health campaign may be needed to address the disparities in knowledge and use of folic acid by women of childbearing age, especially Latina women and women with low education levels.



* Respondents who had knowledge of the importance of folic acid in preventing birth defects.

** Use may be higher than knowledge because women may use prenatal/multi-vitamins for other reasons.

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